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ABSTRACT

The development of an instrument to measure faculty attitudes toward renewal activities is discussed, along with results of applying the instrument with a small sample. Attention was focused on attitudes toward faculty and their development through contact outside the office. The instrument was administered to 15 faculty in the School of Education in a traditionally black university. In the tryout sample, virtually none selected the activities describing informal or accidental contacts or pattern of movement on campus as being typical of their style. However, from 50 to 67 percent indicated that interaction with students and faculty at scheduled events off campus was a usual pattern. Eighty percent agreed that faculty should improve their skills in making informal contact with students, staff, and other faculty. They indicated that such meetings might provide an opportunity to show interest and concern, and that work outside the office assisted them in their total personal development. The average number of hours spent weekly by the sample in informal contact with students and faculty (outside the office) was 3.5 hours. The relationship between responses and faculty rank, tenure, status, gender, and age is also briefly examined. (SW)

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Extending Classroom Office and Self -- Developing An Instrument to Measure Attitudes Toward Faculty Involvement in Renewal Activities

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The need for reaching out from the usual, the necessary, the ordinary scope of activities to those that are unplanned, casual, and renewing may be assumed to be a need for many aside from the student development professional or administrator of higher education. The college or university professor may also profit from attention to his or her role as both a facilitator and beneficiary of informal activities that extend and enliven the usual teaching and research functions. Faculty may gain personal renewal for themselves and reinforcement of more traditional learning activities for their students, but these may be hard to pinpoint, and may not be considered valuable by everyone.

The question of faculty attitudes toward this somewhat fuzzy area of activity then arises. Is there an interest among university faculty in unplanned, renewal activities? What kinds of activities are thought by faculty to serve such a function?

With a view toward developing a procedure for examining such questions, this paper reports the development of an instrument to measure faculty attitudes toward renewal activities.

Background

The classical model for the university was a "community of scholars", with faculty and students engaged in interaction and discussion in many settings. Faculty development and student development then progressed within the same context. As we have advanced to the modern university, we find faculty offices often far removed from classrooms. In the urban university, there is the additional complication of both faculty and students living in widely separated city neighborhoods or suburbs. Both students and faculty must take deliberate efforts to interact, if interaction is going to take

place. Yet, it seems likely that informal contacts would be valued for self-renewal, and for gaining perspective to better understand both students and colleagues. Within this setting, it seems reasonable to investigate how university faculty feel about initiating and engaging in informal contacts with students and with other faculty.

Faculty development is an area which receiving serious attention from higher education administrators and faculty. In the literature, faculty development is generally defined much in the manner of Gaff (1975), as,

> "enhancing the talents expanding the interests, improving the competence and otherwise facilitating the professional and personal growth of faculty members" (p. 14).

However, the bulk of the literature deals with the aspects of faculty development which relate to improvement and extension of professional, teaching and research skills and competencies. Personal renewal would seem to have a role here, too, even when focussing on profcssional development, just as we have come to know that when the attention of the student is extended beyond the classroom, his or her intellectual development may also be enhanced. Yet, when informal activities are discussed in the literature, it is primarily in the context of possible impact on students, and not on the faculty themselves. For example, Jacob (1957) found that faculty influence on student values appears more pronounced at institutions where associations between faculty and students is normal and frequent and students find teachers receptive to unhurried and relaxed conversation "out of class".

Some studies have examined affects of students interaction on both students and faculty. In two broad studies of faculty views of teaching and faculty impact on students, Wilson, Gaff, et al, (1975) found that in addition to a number of benefits to students, faculty who have the most out-of-class

interaction with students seemed to get more enjoyment and sense of accomplishment from teaching, have a greater sense of personal effectiveness, and seemed more visibly effective to their colleagues. Sanford (1971) and Bevan (1974) and Noonan (1972, 1974) have all noted that while instruction is the primary role of most faculty members, instructional quality is affected by their performance in other roles, such as research, committee work, and community involvement. In his book, Toward Faculty Renewal, Gaff (1975) views faculty renewal as retooling for more effective instruction. In that context, he notes the connection between professional work and personal life, and that if one is developing an instructional improvement program, specific efforts may need to be made to promote the personal growth of individuals.

Involvement in interactions with faculty and students maybe related to other characteristics. In a study of preferred activities of faculty in agricultural and in community colleges, Corwin (1978) found that faculty feedback and that younger faculty were even more receptive to interactions with students. In contrast, he found that while faculty also welcomed interaction with and feedback from faculty colleagues, this satisfaction was greater among faculty who had been teaching longer. The difference in primary responsibilities of faculty and student development professionals may affect their out-of-class involvements. As faculty advance in rank, they may have increasing responsibilities that lessen opportunity for casual interaction. Yet, Thompson (1961) reported that there was a decrease in total weekly time spent in course preparation with an increase in rank. He reported that assistant professors spent 60.2 hours per week, associate professors 57.8 hours per week and full professors 56.6 hours.

While the primary role of colleges and universities lies in the academic area, emphasis in recent years has been placed on the non-academic side of college, with assistance to students, faculty, staff and administrators in their emotional, social and personal growth. Thus, differences between the findings of Koos and of Thompson may have been due in part to a shift from concern with academics only, to one of expanding the individual development of the campus community. As colleges and universities shift their emphasis from only academia to the total development of the entire college community, so must issues and programs addressing faculty development. The area of faculty development need not be confined to developing effective ways for faculty to improve instruction. It is also appropriate to focus on and be sensitive to the faculty member as a person, and to consider how out-of-class activities might enhance development as a person, as well as a teacher.

Much of the literature in faculty development focuses on those teaching in an undergraduate setting, due to the large proportion of students and faculty involved at this level, and the great increase in diversity among that group in recent years. A neglected academic area in the literature has been the Education unit, be it a School of Education, a college, or a department. Ducharme (1981) has pointed out the need for faculty development in such units, although his major emphasis on personal growth is the suggesting of the involvement of faculty at a personal level in their faculty development effort.

Procedure

An instrument designed to measure attitudes of administrators in higher education toward "getting out of the office", development at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (Graham, 1984) was the base for this instrument development study. The wording of questionnaire items was changed to reflect a shift in focus from administration to faculty. Questions were also added to broaden the focus of possible attitudes toward faculty and their development through outside the office contact.

The result self administered questionnaire is four pages long and takes approximately 5-7 minutes to complete. It includes dichotomous and Likert type items. Instruments were placed in faculty mail boxes with an envelope and instructions to return them to the senior author. The instrument was administered to a small tryout sample of fifteen faculty in the Department of Psychoeducational Studies of the School of Education in a traditionally black university. The departmental programs include masters and doctoral programs in Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology, and masters programs in Special Education, Student Development, and Research Methodology. A few undergraduate courses are also taught in the department.

Relationships between all items and certain characteristics were examined, including rank, years of teaching, gender, and age. Relationships between the items were also examined. Faculty were told that the instrument was being tried out, and they were encouraged to make comments on the questionnaire. A few items were slightly edited for clarity as a result of faculty comments.

Results

The results of this instrument development study are reported by describing the instrument itself, and the findings from the small tryout sample. Due to the size of the sample, these results are presented only to outline the way the instrument might be used in a larger group.

Item scores were collapsed to two categories for most analyses. The item p-values ranged from 12% to 88%, which suggests that the range of possible attitudes was well covered. Items with p-values in the middle to upper ranges were low to moderately correlated. For those faculty who had the highest (strongest attitude toward renewal) scores it was found that items logically considered as reflecting this attitude were included in their scores. Faculty with lowest attitude scores did not agree with those statements thought to reflect stronger attitudes toward renewal. This finding suggests the possibility of Guttman scaling for some items to create a shorter scale, but much further tryout information would need to be collected.

In the tryout sample, virtually none selected the four activities describing informal, accidental, contacts or pattern of movement on campus as being typical of their style, yet from 50 to 67% indicated that interaction with students and faculty at scheduled events on and off-campus was a usual pattern for them.

Although most faculty had not thought much about the value of informal chance contacts with students and faculty outside the office, 80% agreed that faculty should improve their skills in making informal contact with students, staff, and other faculty more rewarding, that change meetings provide an opportunity to show a caring and interested attitude, and that work outside the office assisted them in their total personal development.

Eight-seven percent (87%) felt that student class achievement was enhanced by their out-of-class contacts with faculty.

The sample disagreed (80%) with the turning over of all responsibility for informal contacts with students to student development professionals, and agreed (67%) that they should get out of the office more often. Yet, few felt the need for a staff development program on the topic or that such activity should be supported or rewarded by the department. They also expressed no difficulty in maintaining the balance of office and informal contacts.

The average number of hours weekly spent by the sample in informal contacts with students and faculty outside the office was 3.5, and about half thought ideally, this should be increased. Nearly all felt that their understanding of the student perspectives was enhanced by this type of activity, and that their presence at campus activities was appreciated.

The relationships between the questionnaire items and faculty ranks, tenure, gender and age were examined. Correlations significant at the .05 level are reported here. Assistant professors were more likely to attend campus social and cultural events, while senior faculty were more likely to extend themselves on campus to meet those who would be unlikely to come by their offices. Both of these findings are similar to results found in the Corwin (1978) Study. Untenured faculty tended to agree with the statement that colleagues and supervisors might feel that spending time in informal contacts was not a valuable use of time. Female faculty tended to value chance meetings on campus, but there were no other significant sex differences on the items. Age was not significantly correlated with any of the test items.

After scoring the questionnaire items in the direction indicating a positive attitude toward informal, unstructured contacts with faculty and students, a total score was constructed with possible values from zero to 33. For this tryout sample, the mean value was 9.9, and the standards deviation was 4.3.

The similarity of many of the findings in the literature to the results for this sample lends modest support to the validity of this instrument for assessing attitudes toward personal development through informal contacts with students and faculty. Further validation should be sought in using it with larger faculty groups.

The general findings among this sample support the idea that faculty do want and enjoy informal contacts with students and other faculty, and they feel that they are important and should be increased. The vehicle for encouraging this step in development, however, is unclear, and the literature is limited in this area. Further work with the instrument should be useful in developing a base of information on faculty attitudes toward renewal activities. This information offers potential for broadening needs of faculty, and thus, to assist in the more effective functioning of the total university campus.

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